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'Joe Turner's Come And Gone' To Be Performed At Black Box Theatre

March 28, 2012

Mical Whitaker returns to Georgia Southern to direct the University theatre program's performance of August Wilson's award winning drama *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*. Set in a Pittsburgh boarding house in 1911, the play is the second chapter of Wilson's 10-play cycle of the 20th Century for African-Americans, the migration and dispersion of their race and culture.

Joe Turner tells the story of a culture in transition, a new group of citizens heading north, going from — as they put it — “cain't to can.” Wilson imagines an entire population, only 50 years out of slavery, as they try to find footholds in a land that keeps shaking them loose.

The show begins Wednesday, April 11 at 7:30 p.m. at the Black Box Theatre, located in the Center for Art and Theatre, and runs through April 18 with a 2 p.m. matinee performance Sunday, April 15.

Boarding house owners Seth and Bertha Holly play host to a family of people who come to stay — some for days, others longer — during the Great Migration of the 1910s, when descendants of former slaves moved in large numbers from the South toward the industrial cities of the North, seeking new lives.

“Wilson's characters virtually straddle the hyphen of the term ‘African-American;’ they struggle in the latter, but get their sustenance from the former. What is remarkable and enlightening is that Wilson's two worlds are not locked in mortal conflict: it can be a joyous as well as scary,” said Whitaker.

Among those on the migration are Herald Loomis and his young daughter, Zonia. Haunted by their past, they are in search of the long gone Martha, Herald's wife. Herald arrives at the boarding house unsettled and secretive, making Seth Holly suspicious. He wants Loomis out as soon as he arrives, but Bertha and the others see things differently, and by action and example, help set him on the way to recovery.

“Like most of Wilson's plays, *Joe Turner* portrays characters living in a tender equilibrium of two worlds: a pragmatic, commercial, white-ruled America lying opposite and parallel to a spiritual black world, still nourished by African roots,” said Whitaker.

Having directed three of Wilson's plays while at Georgia Southern, Whitaker says he is excited for the opportunity to direct his personal favorite. The play contains a rich but odd mixture of cultural traditions, such as working roots and powders, talking in tongues and the “juba” dance style.

“As this period and circumstances are identical to my own grandparents as they fled the social and economic inequities of rural southeast Georgia for Pennsylvania, I have a personal investment in this project,” said Whitaker.

Tickets are \$5 for students, \$10 for faculty/staff and \$15 for general admission. To schedule interviews, photo shoots, or other press related activities please contact in advance. For tickets or directions, contact the Theatre Box Office at 912-478-5379.

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